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homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Thursday, June 15, 1944

Subject: "WHAT CAN I DO ON A FARM?" Information from farm labor specialists of the War Food Administration.

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From one end of the country to the other, women are writing to Miss Florence Hall, chief of the Women's Land Army. They are offering to give all the time they have to help harvest crops this summer, and they ask many questions about how to enlist for this work. Some of those questions may be the same ones you had in mind, so we asked Miss Hall to answer a few of the more typical questions for us.

First, a woman from Chicago says -- "I should like to know about working on a farm during my 2 or 3 weeks' vacation this summer -- anything within a radius of 50 miles I could reach by bicycle. Have had no experience on a farm but would like to work outdoors and am hardy - Will I get paid for the work?" --------

She's right! -- Any young lady who can pedal a bicycle 50 miles is certainly hardy -- and that's one of the requirements for a good farm worker. Miss Hall points out to this Chicago Miss that there will be a great need for corn detasselers near Chicago this year. Detasseling is a job you can learn easily even if you don't have any experience. And it's an important job. Growers of hybrid seed corn have agreed to step up their acreage of hybrid seed corn by more than 10 percent, that means they will need more detasselers. Last year women did very good work in the hybrid corn fields. So if you are interested write your county agricultural agent.

As for the pay. You'll get the going wage for the kind of work you do. The farmers expect to pay the prevailing wage for unskilled labor.

A Pennsylvania girl writes "I am able to give a whole season to the farms. Oh, yes, I'm a city girl but believe me I'm used to hard work and am willing."

Used to hard work and willing is a good recommendation to any farmer. Last year many girls, with the long summer vacation to work on a farm, proved to be invaluable on dairy farms, relieving the farmer of much of the dairy routine so he could work in the fields. For this sort of a job write your Women's Land Army Superviser at the State Agricultural College or see your nearest county agricultural agent.

From New York comes this letter. "I am employed as a stenographer, but do not work on Saturdays and, therefore, feel it would be possible to do farm work weekends."

There is and will be great need for many such spare-time workers to do emergency jobs in harvesting fruits and vegetables. As this sort of labor is used mostly in emergency harvesting, the best thing to do is to watch the papers for news of special needs in your part of the country. The county agricultural agent will know when such emergencies are likely to come up and it is a good idea to keep in touch with his office or some farm placement bureau.

From California a serviceman's wife writes - I am eager to work in the harvest this year. Can you please direct me to a local agency which can send me somewhere to work? My husband is in the Army and I am not engaged in essential work, so am anxious to get started as soon as possible.

More power to you. You will find many more service men's wives in the Women's Land Army and we are very proud of the work they are doing - giving all that is in them to insure a food supply to win the war. You will find plenty of opportunity in your State. Write to the California Women's Land Army supervisor, at the University of California in Berkeley.

The following 3 letters pleased me very much for they represent a type of workers much needed, first from Virginia - I am very anxious to be of service to my country during this emergency. I am 46 years old, was raised on a farm and understand the problems and difficulties of farm life. From Tennessee - "Do you have

work for the summer suitable for teachers?" And, from Texas - "For three years I've tried to teach health and physical education by taking my girls to fields near city schools in which I teach and help in harvesting. Could you place me for the summer to lead groups of girls in farming.

Many such women are needed to supervise and direct the work of the younger Victory Farm Volunteer group. They are needed in many parts of the country but perhaps most where large groups work in picking tomatoes, detasseling hybrid-seed corn, weeding vegetables in truck farms, picking, grading and packing vegetables, picking apples or cherries, picking up potatoes in Maine or Alabama or Idaho, and many other jobs requiring a great deal of hand labor. Write your qualifications to the Emergency farm labor supervisor, at the State Agricultural College or get in touch with your local county agricultural agent.

Another question often asked is about getting gasoline for office workers, businessmen, housewives, and others who volunteer for spare-time labor on farms. The Office of Price Administration assures us volunteer workers can get special gasoline rations to take them to and from the place where they are needed. Special boards in emergency labor areas are being organized to consider applications. To get special worker's ration of gasoline the worker must be certified by the county agricultural agent or his labor assistant and must carry a full car to and from the farm.

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